

READING COMPREHENSION

'Comprehension' means understanding. Teaching Comprehension aims at developing in the learner the ability to read in such a way that he / she gets the full meaning of the text. For reading with comprehension one should have the knowledge of words; their meanings in different situations and the knowledge of the grammatical patterns, which establish the interrelationship of words and their meanings in particular situations.

Comprehension is mainly of two types - Factual and Logical. Factual comprehension means grasping of facts and objective information. Logical comprehension means grasping the underlying meaning. Proper comprehension includes understanding of the implied meaning also.

Notice that grammatical structures also add to the meaning of the text. Look at the following text:

Luckily he was too distant to see me.

To comprehend the meaning of the above text, one has to know the meaning of the structure 'too.....to', so that one gets to know that the person mentioned was so distant that he could not see the narrator. Secondly, under the given circumstances, the narrator did not want to be seen by the man referred to. The latter understanding is implied by the use of the word 'luckily'.

Exercise

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions given below:

Passage 1

What do you think of the man who eats a banana in front of a shop and gaily throws the skin on the road? He is a pest indeed but perhaps not quite a match for the man or woman who slips into your garden very early in the morning before you are awake. All the roses that you have tried so hard to produce are picked and put away in a basket in a trice. When you step into the garden to feast your eyes on your roses, they are just not there! The worst pest, however, is the man who lives next door and celebrates the marriage of his daughters once every two months till all the six girls are married off. This monster hires loudspeakers which shriek away from very early in morning till late at night. At that volume music simply ceases to be music and becomes a shrill stream of noise that shatters your ear-drums and tears your nerves

apart. Nobody who has been forced to endure this for a day will ever want another wedding to take place in the locality again.

1. What can be the most suitable title of the passage ?
 - (a) Social pests
 - (b) Nuisance makers
 - (c) Anti-social elements
 - (d) none
2. What does the man who slips into your garden want the flowers for?
3. Who are the men that have been mentioned as social pests ?
4. What does the man who has a number of daughters do ?
5. What does 'pest' mean?
6. What does the sentence.... "but perhaps not quite a match for the man" communicate ?

Passage 2

Bansilal's train was late and it reached Mumbai a little after mid-night. It was his first visit to the city, and he didn't know where to go. He thought he would go to a choultry where he would not have to pay rent, but he did not know how to find one at that hour. He asked a porter to get him a cheap room. The porter said that if Bansilal gave him three rupees, he would take him to one. But Bansilal waived him away and walked out of the station. He wandered through the streets and asked a number of people, but could not find a room cheap enough for him. He sat down on a park bench to think of what he should do next. He was very tired and fell asleep on the bench. He woke up the next morning stiff in every limb - but he smiled when he realized that it was the cheapest night's lodging that he had ever had.

- (i) Bansilal is a man of:
 - (a) Miserly nature
 - (b) Generous nature
 - (c) Only one incident has been mentioned, and we cannot say anything
 - (d) none
- (ii) "But Bansilal waived him away". What does "waived" here mean?
 - (a) agreed
 - (b) disagreed
 - (c) refused to pay
 - (d) none
- (iii) How did Bansilal comfort himself in the morning:

- (a) It was a good night's lodging
 - (b) It was the cheapest night's lodging
 - (c) It was the most comfortable night's lodging
 - (d) All the above
- (iv) He thought he would go to a choultry ...What does 'choultry' mean?
- (a) Dharamshala
 - (b) Birthplace
 - (c) Guesthouse
 - (d) Inn
- (v) "He woke up the next morning stiff in every limb" what does 'stiff in limb' refer to :
- (a) Tired
 - (b) Exhausted
 - (c) Not comfortable
 - (d) None
- (vi) "But he did not know how to find one at that hour" What does 'one' refer to ?
- (a) Choultry
 - (b) Bansilal
 - (c) Train
 - (d) Porter
- (vii) But he smiled when he realized...." What does 'smiled' mean?
- (a) laughed very loudly
 - (b) felt happy
 - (c) felt a sense of consolation
 - (d) None
- (viii) "He was very tired and fell asleep on the bench." Which word in the sentence tells you that Bansilal had not planned to sleep on the bench.
- (a) fell asleep
 - (b) tired
 - (c) on the bench
 - (d) none
- (ix) Why did Bansilal think he would go to a choultry ?
- (x) What did the Porter say to Bansilal?
- (xi) What did Bansilal do in the park?

Passage 3

People moan about poverty as a great evil and it seems to be an accepted belief that if people had plenty of money, they would be happy and cheerful and get more out of life. As a rule, there is more genuine satisfaction in life and more is obtained from life in the humble cottages of the poor than in the places of the rich. I always pity the sons and daughters of rich men, who are attended by servants and have governesses at a later stage; at the same time I am glad to think they do not know what they have missed.

It is because I know how sweet and happy and pure the home of honest poverty is, how free from perplexing care and from social envies and jealousies - how loving and united the members are in the common interest of supporting the family that I sympathise with the rich man's boy and congratulate the poor man's son. It is for these reasons that from the ranks of the poor so many strong, eminent, self-reliant men have always sprung and must always spring. If you read the list of the "immortals who were not born to die" you will find that most of them have been poor.

1. What is the popular notion about poverty ?
2. Are the rich persons happier than the poor ones ?
3. Why does the writer pity the rich man's boy ?
4. What are the blessings of honest poverty ?

(Adapted from *A Practical Manual of General English*)

Passage 4

The tendency is for people to consume ready-made food articles rather than to bother with cooking. In old fashioned England one starts the day with porridge which requires to be cooked daily. In America, on the other hand, there are various kinds of ready-made breakfast foods, Soups, meat-dishes, fish, vegetables, cakes, sweets and fruits are obtained in tins all ready to be used without cooking. They are produced on a mass scale and sold so cheap that it is often more expensive to buy the raw material for them from the market and cook them in the house. Besides, cooking means time and space for kitchen and washing. All this is avoided by the use of tinned foods. Such stale food cannot have the nutritive value of fresh food. Nor is there the possibility of expressing one's individuality in the dishes one turns out as in the old world. But these things are of little consideration to those who are out to profit by a large-scale centralized production and unwary customer falls a ready prey to the greed of the capitalist. He depends on other even for the preparation of his food, and thus tends to become helpless and resourceless.

1. What is the general tendency among the Americans regarding food?
2. What is the difference between the eating habits of the Britishers and the Americans ?
3. Why do the Americans prefer ready-made food?
4. What are the chief defects of ready-made food?